



Sixth Annual Granger Christmas Newsletter



CURRENTS

January 2, 1995 Rancho Penasquitos, San Diego, CA

After cramming to get the last newsletter out for 1994, Karen suggested I get an early start writing this year's tome. A great concept, however now that the new year has begun I just can't seem to dredge up a whole lot to talk about, unless you want to hear about the New Years party we went to - it's all a blur anyway. (355 days later...)

It appears we've been victimized once again by what physicists might call a foreshortening of the space-time continuum, or what economists might lament as an erosion in the value of time, or what our parents described as "getting older faster". Or in the plain vernacular, "another year down the tubes."

Okay, you can't say we didn't warn you. The information super-highway has finally arrived bigtime, and even if you wanted to ignore it you probably can't. Now that CBS, NBC, and ESPN are all on the internet, it's amusing to hear sports commentators trying to enunciate the lengthy addresses one must type in to access their web sites. One day soon, some influential guru will finally suggest a way to pronounce "http://www.blah.blah.com" (pronounced ...BLAH-DOT-BLAH-DOT-KOM) so that it rolls off the tongue, but we're not holding our breath. Besides, who needs TV when you can go mano-a-mano with famous personalities during live chat sessions on American Online?

During the past year, we've had an opportunity to observe the progress of the digital revolution up close and personal. Back in the Pleistocene era of World Wide Web development (about 11 months ago), Prodigy became the first commercial service to offer grassroots access to the Internet. The state of Web technology then versus now can be compared to what "Pong" was in 1980 to modern video games. Now just about anybody with a computer, a modem, and some inexpensive software can set up shop on the internet... (Karen says this is getting way too technical, so I'll close by offering the following for your consideration.)

Does Santa have a home page on the Internet? There is speculation that he can be reached at one or more of the following locations:

Greenland <http://www.greenland-guide.dk/santa-claus>
North Pole <http://www.familyinternet.com/santa>
Korvatunturi, Finland <http://www.rotol.fi/roi/pukki.html>

and of course, there's <http://www.santa.com> as well as <http://www.elves.com> or try Holly and Sara's Christmas Page at <http://www.logicnet.com/melanie.mccluskey/index.htm>

Most Unusual Web Site Award: The "Monastery of Christ in the Desert" is located at the end of some dirt road in northern New Mexico. They don't own a car, they don't even have a reliable source of electricity, but...they're on the Web. They use a cellular phone for their computer linkup. You can learn about monastic life, browse the monastery's gift shop, or listen to a Gregorian chant (<http://www.christdesert.org/pax.html>).

The Granger's web site is currently under construction, coming soon to a server near you. You can reach us now by Email at scubanut1@aol.com or jgranger@electriciti.com. Hey, it's faster than a letter and may be cheaper than a phone call!

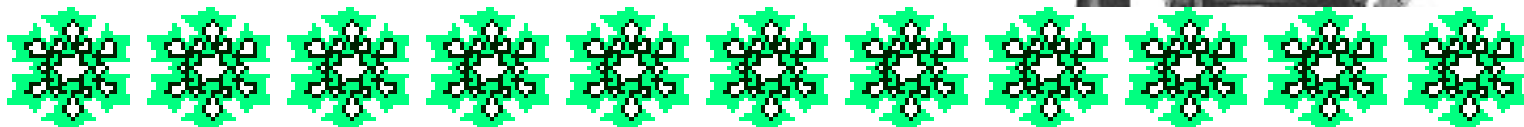
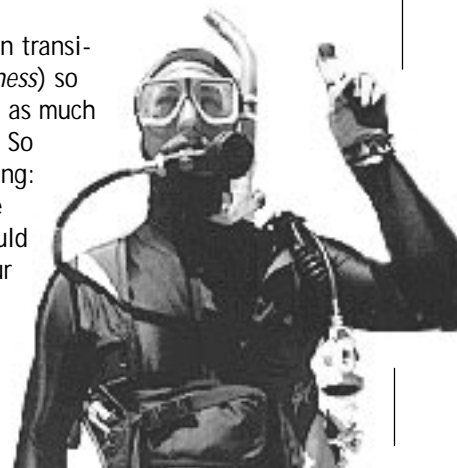
Milestones

We became a great uncle and aunt on August 2nd when John's niece Lindy gave birth to a 6 lb, 10 oz. boy, christened Tresean (pronounced Trey-shawn). He is now about 18 lbs, more than triple his original birthweight, tall and big. Sister Carol's son Dylan is 2 years 9 months old and is a budding talk show host. He recently saw a department store Santa standing in the back of a pickup truck outside the mall. "What's Santa doing in a pickup truck?" he asked his Mom. After cursing the ill-timed arrival of the truck, Carol thought quickly and said "Well honey, his sleigh must have broken down (!)"

Karen's family held a joyful reunion in August up at Ma and Roy's in Banning, the first time in a long while that sisters and brothers were all together along with aunts, uncles and cousins. Joining the reunion was Karen's niece Lori of Apple Valley, who wedded her fireman, James Ponszak, in July.

TRAVEL

John's career has been in transition this year (see *Business*) so we haven't gotten to do as much diving as we would like. So we did the next best thing: we dove virtually on the World Wide Web. We would like to share a few of our favorite sites with you. Even if you aren't a diver, you might find them useful/amusing.



Crappy Divesite Home Page (<http://www.web.cps.msu.edu/~kaszeta/scuba.html>): Can't afford to go to the South Pacific? Or just can't wait to get wet? This page was written for divers who say "45 degrees? Crappy viz? Smelly water? And not a damn thing to see? Cool! How do I get there?"

Conde Nast Traveler (<http://www.cntraveler.com/>): Online vacation planner offers its extensive database of destination and hotel/resort information in a format that's easy to use. Just key in where you want to go, what you like to do, how much you want to spend, etc. and the planner comes up with a list of options that fit your criteria (Thanks to Jimbo Zangerle for the hot tip about this page...). Another good site is Rodales Scuba Diving <http://www.scubadiving.com/>

To rent a houseboat on Lake Powell, it's generally a good idea to reserve at least a year in advance. In August, our long planned for trip finally arrived. While it is an extremely popular destination during the summer, the lake is so immense that you can still find secluded coves to

park in (or for the nautically fastidious, "anchor in") for the night. Living in the city, it's easy to forget how many stars one can see in a clear desert evening sky. On a typical day, we went for an eye-opener morning ski, had a full breakfast (a real treat, especially since we took turns cooking), cruised about half a day to the next site, then played the rest of the afternoon. The environs offered plenty of opportunity to explore Indian ruins and hike in the hot sun (or relax in the water with a cold beer and be entertained by others hiking in the hot sun). We'll remember the balmy temperature, jet skis and water skiing, good food, and good times with our seven "cast-away" friends!

We escaped to Catalina Island in October for the 3rd consecutive year with sister Alisa and John for the annual JazzTrax festival, complemented by excellent shore diving at Casino Point. John Sharon caught the dive bug and now there won't be anything stopping him!



Formula for an excellent vacation: Houseboat + Lake Powell = Relaxation!

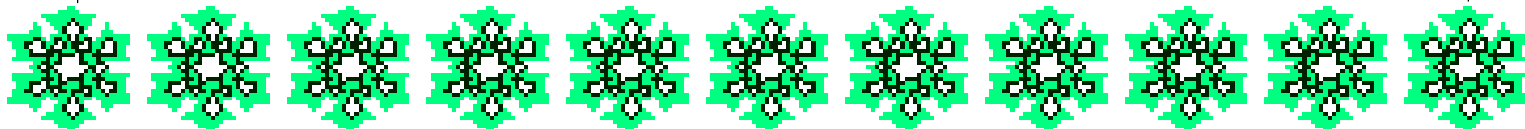
S P O R T S

Char-gers! Char-gers! Char-gers!

Remember, you heard it here first last year at this time in this very column. The Bolts did indeed go to the Big Show in Miami in January, and have worn the mantle of AFC Champions in 1995. For us long-suffering Boltheads, it was the ultimate payoff. Too bad they lost to that *other* team, but no matter. We spent Superbowl weekend with the Action Ski Club fanatics in Mammoth. To show our support for the Bolts, John wore a Chargers team flag as a cape while skiing all over the mountain. Hearing the cheers from other skiers on the chairlifts, the ratio of Chargers fans to 49er fans had to be about 10:1. Later, John entered a ski race, wearing the cape for good luck. It must have worked; he not only won the race, he moved up a class!

Pablo Nogatoches, Charger masochist extraordinaire, predicts at least a playoff berth for the Bolts this year. A Las Vegas denizen, Pablo practices the football gambler's version of "Santorita". Although he doesn't use ceremonial chicken parts and incense, he has been known to sacrifice a few bucks by betting on the other team to ensure a Chargers victory. At least his contrarian methods worked against Indianapolis last week. Pablo is looking for donors this week against the Giants...

After 10 years and several near misses, the Viking Productions (formerly Staefa) coed softball team finally won the whole enchilada (hmmm.. coincidence?). In the league championship game, our team was ahead by one run with two on and two outs in the bottom of the final inning. The opposing team's last batter hits a routine grounder to short, and the runners are streaking toward home. The throw to first base is LOW, and starts rolling away. But Kathy the first baseperson, in a desperate reach, seizes the ball just before the runner tags the base for the final out and saves the season. Truly a Maalox moment!





Work is the meat of life, pleasure the dessert...
- Bertie Charles Forbes

BUSINESS

Careerwise, 1995 has been a year of profound transition. In the summer, Family Fitness Centers merged with 24 Hour Nautilus, and the resulting organization will enable the company to expand even more rapidly. For Karen, this has meant additional challenges. She took a 11-week human resources management course in the fall and earned top marks. She continues to have a leading role in the implementation and enforcement of government guidelines (EEOC/ADA) pertaining to employee relations. Occasionally this responsibility has meant traveling to clubs in the L.A. area and beyond to investigate a case. All such matters are confidential, but if Karen could tell you about them, she'd say "...and I thought I'd heard everything!", and you'll certainly never catch her saying "I have such a dull job..."

John has been busy reinventing his career. He began the year with Drake-Beam-Morin, an outplacement firm, who helped immensely in terms of job search training, job market orientation, and networking. He then spent a week in Philadelphia with longtime friend and computer consultant Shelby Smith studying advanced database development techniques. Following up on an ad in a professional software developer organization newsletter, John spent 10 weeks in a 300-hour training program learning how to produce multimedia software programs. Sponsored by a nonprofit organization called Foundation College, the training gave all participants a working knowledge of extremely cool, cutting-edge software development tools. At the end of the program, everyone had produced an interactive resume for distribution to potential employers in the multimedia industry. The employer receives not only a traditional paper resume, but a software program that creatively touts the development skills of the candidate while "entertaining" the employer in the process. John's training has led directly to a contract position with Binary Labs, a small, but energetic and expanding multimedia software de-

veloper in Pacific Beach (you may remember them from our last newsletter as "Viking Entertainment"). In addition to the people, one of the nicer "perks" is that the office is two blocks from the beach!

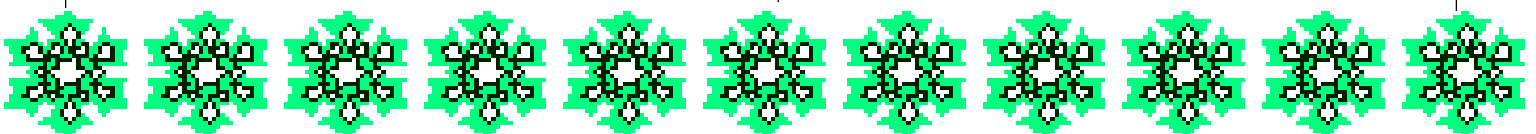
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PERSONALS

This year has been richly rewarding in many ways. We've rededicated ourselves to a commitment to life-long learning, and we've met many wonderful new friends through the job search process and through professional groups.

When a big change happens in your life, you are often forced to confront and reevaluate your values. Having gone through this roundabout, circumspect process, one may find that the most valuable things are those that have been cherished all along. In fact, it is not "things" at all, but you - family and friends - that matter most.

Season's Greetings



Don't Try This At Home (A funny story.....)

I hate to admit it, but this happened to me way back in 1980 —

A few years after graduating from college, I returned to my folks home to retrieve a considerable number of storage boxes that I had left with them. These boxes were filled with books, course notes, old homework projects, etc that I had kept. I decided to weed through them and eliminate as much junk as I could.

Not having the heart to dump all that hard work into the garbage, I decided to grab a six-pack, settle down in front of the downstairs fireplace and ceremoniously burn four years worth of college memorabilia. I managed to get through about five of the 15 or so boxes piled around me when I realized I could not possibly sort through each box page-by-page. In the interest of time, I decided to do a cursory scan of the contents to determine if anything 'jumped out' as worth saving. Well, box number six appeared to be loaded with Psychology and Logic 101 junk so I took the short cut and tossed the whole box on the funeral pyre before me.

I popped open beer number four and watched the box smolder. Raising the can, I gave one last salute to those two unmemorable courses as the box erupted into a roaring inferno.

The papers were consumed rapidly.

So were the ancient contents of the dresser drawer that I had hastily dropped into the bottom of that box when packing two years earlier. Dang, I had forgotten all about that stuff. The toothbrush and hairbrush went up rather well ... also that packet of disposable plastic razors, dental floss and contact lense case and a bunch of junk I don't even remember. Of course, I didn't even know that stuff was going up in smoke as I sat there. Just chugged the beer and watched. It burned great...right down to that full can of deodorant that was in there with it all.

I had gotten about half the beer down when that deodorant can finally decided it had had enough. What happened next I can only compare to the scene from "2001" where that Dave Bowman guy is falling through all those lights with that 'o sh-t!' look on his face. I heard a BOOM so loud that my brain only registered it as a high-pitched squeal. The contents of the fireplace right down to the last ash were propelled out with such velocity that all I could see were a multitude of bright streaks emanating from a point about three feet in front of me (ala 2001). Big blue shock wave knocked me back. Spill the beer? You bet. Caught me off guard? Hell yes. Felt like I jumped on a live grenade? Guess so. One second I was watching that inferno burn from the outside, the next second I was watching it from the inside.

The human brain reverts to 'primordial slime' mode

when thrown into a situation like this. All higher-order functions vaporize. Guess it's all those endorphines and endomorphines hitting it at once. It took a couple of seconds to get the 'reasoning' capability of my brain back online. I jumped up, looked at my hands and feet, touched my face and realized that I was indeed intact. Holy Cow, I was completely untouched. Not even a soot mark on me. Although I might possibly qualify as a human cannon ball, there would be no Richard Pryor imitation tonight, folks.

I looked through the thick smoke toward the fireplace. What WAS a 6-inch deep accumulation of one winter's ashes was now squeaky clean. Blasted it right out. All those burning embers were now sitting on the deep-pile carpet behind me. ALL over the room. I grabbed the little shovel from the fireplace set and scooped as fast as I could. As soon as I filled the shovel, I'd run to the fireplace, empty it and run back. Some embers were 30 feet down the hall. I guess I set the Guinness World Record for "Hot ember pickup with a little shovel" in those next few minutes. I did manage to avoid setting my folks house on fire, and the carpet only had one or two real serious melted spots on it. I DID find the deodorant can too- it had left the fireplace at some ungodly serious velocity, hit the wall at the far end of the room and come to rest directly behind where I was sitting. Dang thing was split wide open along the weld and peeled back almost flat. Burned black, too. Looked like re-entry junk.

After I got the Fire Marshal Bill stuff under control, I grabbed beer number five, popped the top and thought about how I was gonna get the remaining mess cleaned up. Close examination revealed that everything was coated with a heavy layer of ash. Heck, a vacuum cleaner will get this stuff up no problem.

Gee, how lucky could I be? I didn't get decapitated, the house is still on its foundation, I got a GREAT story for the grandkids and the cleanup is gonna be a cinch. I grabbed my mom's upright out of the closet and started to work.

Ever have one of those split-seconds of consciousness when you realize you survived something really bad but you sense that it's not quite over yet? Well, I never have, but I wish I had felt that way at this point. Would have clued me in as to what was about to happen.

There I was, sucking up ashes with an upright vacuum. Too bad not all of them were cold. That upright vacuum swallowed ONE LITTLE ITTY BITTY HOT EMBER that was sitting there on the carpet. It flew right up inside it and sat on that big ol' pile of carpet lint way up in that bag. Heck, that bag hadn't been emptied in a long time. And all that air rushing in there made that little bitty hot ember REAL happy. Next thing I know, the side of that vacuum is glowing red

